WILMINGTON PRIORY

An Architectural and Historical Account

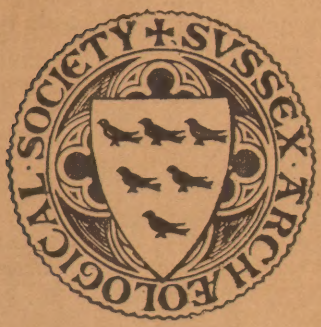
BY

WALTER H. GODFREY, F.S.A.

AND

REV. W. BUDGEN, F.S.A.

With Illustrations and Plan.



This article is reprinted from
"SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS," VOL. LXIX.

Published by the Sussex Archæological Society,
Barbican House, Lewes.

Price 6d.

First Edit. 1928, (1000)

Sussex Archæological Society.

The Sussex Archæological Society, since its foundation in 1846 has taken a leading part in promoting an interest in the history and, memorials of the County of Sussex, in the preservation of its ancient buildings and other monuments of antiquity, and in the study of Archæology in all its varied departments.

The headquarters of the Society are at Barbican House, Lewes, which is open daily for the use of Members; and here are housed the Society's Museum and also its Library.

The Society publishes an annual volume, and also a quarterly journal, dealing with historical, topographical, genealogical, and other antiquarian subjects, including illustrated papers on the ancient churches and buildings of the County, records of the history of its parishes, and of old established Sussex families, descriptions of local customs and folklore, and notes on recent archæological discoveries.

Meetings are held from time to time in various parts of the County for the readings of papers, and opportunities are given for studying on the spot the historical buildings and remains in which the County is so rich.

There is an Entrance Fee of 10s. and an Annual Subscription of the same amount (or, including the quarterly issues of "Sussex Notes and Queries," 15s.) Wives of Members are admitted on payment of a reduced Annual Subscription of 5s., but in that case do not receive the annual volume. Those who wish to become Life Members pay a composition fee of £10 10s.

The Sussex Archæological Trust was incorporated in the year 1925 in order to facilitate the legal ownership of Sussex antiquities by a responsible body. The Long Man of Wilmington and the remains of Wilmington Priory, are vested in the Trust, as well as Lewes Castle, Anne of Cleves' House, Southover, the Marlipins, Shoreham, and ancient cottages at West Tarring.

Further particulars of the Society and the Trust, and forms of application for Membership, can be had on application to the Hon. Secretary, Sussex Archæological Society, Barbican House, Lewes.

From a drawing by S. H. Grimm (18*th cent.*)

S. Front of Wilmington Priory, showing 14th Century Hall on the left.

Sussex Archæological Society.

WILMINGTON PRIORY: AN ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION.

By WALTER H. GODFREY, F.S.A.

The generous gift of Wilmington Priory by the Duke of Devonshire to the Sussex Archæological Trust confers a privilege as well as a responsibility upon that body, which it is very ready to acknowledge. The extent of both will be the more clearly appreciated from the account of its remarkable history which follows, and from the description of its no less interesting buildings, which are now set down as fully as the present condition of our knowledge will admit. Owing to the ruinous state of the buildings, the Trust has been involved in a large outlay to make them secure, and much still remains to be done. During this preliminary work I have had the opportunity of surveying the remains and of making certain investigations, the results of which are here recorded.

The priory, as is more fully explained in the historical notes by the Rev. W. Budgen, F.S.A., came to be the headquarters in this country, of the Abbot of Grestain, in regard to the English property of the Abbey. As a small alien priory with but a meagre establishment it did not necessarily conform to the claustral plan with which we are familiar elsewhere. In all probability it approximated much more nearly to a grange or manor-house than to a monastery, and if this were so it would go far towards explaining the absence of a coherent plan in a dwelling-house, the design of which has been further confused by many vicissitudes

and changes. Some excavations already carried out give hope that further exploration below ground will help to elucidate some of the problems, but it has seemed to the present writer worth while to record the relics that exist to-day without theorising too far on the subject of the original plan.

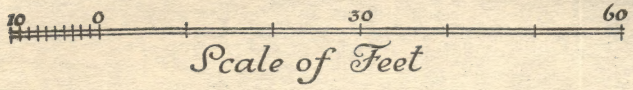
It will, I think, be found more convenient to note the buildings in order of position than in order of date, and we may begin with the parish church, the eastern part of which was no doubt rebuilt by the monks and used by them soon after the foundation of the Priory. It will not be necessary for me to refer to the description of the Priory and Church by the Rev. G. M. Cooper (*S.A.C.*, Vol. IV.), except in cases where his evidence on the condition of the latter building before its restoration in 1883 is of value.

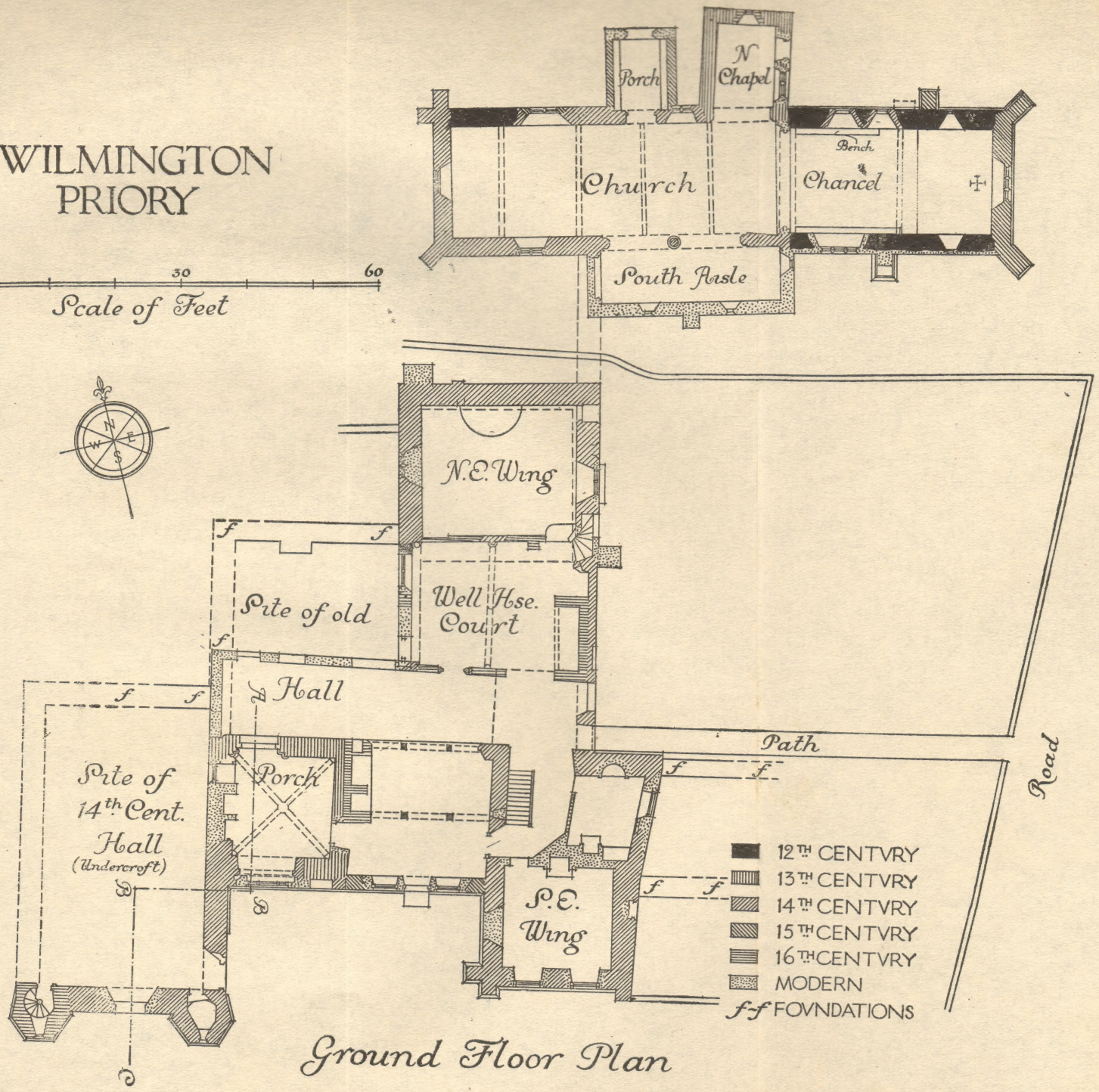
The Church consists now of a nave and chancel, with a modern chancel arch, a short aisle of two bays on the south side, a transeptal chapel and a porch on the north. There is no tower at the west end, but a belfry-loft of timber occupies the position of the westernmost bay of the roof, and projects outside with weatherboarded sides and a somewhat tall shingled broach spire.

The chancel contains a considerable amount of early twelfth century walling, the north wall, with one original window, having much of its original facing and some of its old external rendering, together with sections of a string course with axed cheveron ornament, and a chamfered plinth. In this wall is built, on the outside, a small carved figure of the Virgin and Child, probably of the twelfth century. Attention should be called to the length of the chancel, which for its date is unusually long (some evidence of its monastic use), and there are quoin stones in the centre of the north wall, which suggest an original Norman buttress at this point. Inside the chancel, on both sides, is a considerable length of stone bench, which again points to a collegiate function.

From Extracts from the Account Book of Wilmington

WILMINGTON PRIORY





Ground Floor Plan

Rents, etc., in the Compton Muniments, there is a reference to pulling down the chancel in 1686, and rebuilding it in 1687; also for repairs of the walls, "which were near tumbling down," in 1784. The evidence of the building itself is, however, against rebuilding in a literal sense. The walls inside are far from perpendicular, and considerable strengthening was no doubt required; the south wall was probably underpinned and certainly refaced—but it retains an early twelfth century window—and the east wall has been partly rebuilt, although the latter event probably took place as early as the fifteenth century, when the east window of three lights was inserted. The north wall possesses, beside the easternmost Norman window, a lofty fourteenth century window with trefoil head. Between the two is a fourteenth century "low-side" window, of one light with ogee head and trefoil cusping, and an almost semi-circular rear arch. This window is fully described and illustrated by Mr. P. M. Johnston in *S.A.C.*, Vol. XLII., pp. 137–9. There is a second window, on the south side between the Norman light and the chancel arch, which is of three lights and is modern.

The chancel arch is entirely modern, but replaces one of similar character, indicated by the mutilated stones described and illustrated by Mr. Cooper in *S.A.C.*, Vol. IV. The nave probably contains the core of its twelfth century walling, and part of the old faced work, plaster-coated, on the north side. It is lighted by four two-light windows, two on the north, and one each in the south and west walls. They are all of different designs, and range approximately from 1300 to 1400. It is possible that they have, in part, been taken from the Priory buildings, and especially is this noticeable in the west window. The western wall is of uncertain date, and may not represent the original termination. Both the chancel and the nave contain an excellent trussed rafter roof with heavy tie beams and king posts, which carry the collar purlins by means of curved struts.

The north chapel or transept is irregularly set out and is connected with the nave by a plain chamfered pointed arch resting on simple responds. The walls, which are plastered externally, have quoins of a stone similar to Binstead, and it is probable that this chapel belongs to the first half of the thirteenth century. The porch has a post-reformation front wall, while the north door of the nave is of two orders and of fourteenth century character.

The most interesting feature of the Church plan is the south aisle, which opens to the nave by an arcade of two arches. If the reader will refer to the small plan in *S.A.C.*, Vol. IV., he will see that in 1851 the aisle was in the form of a transept not dissimilar in size from that on the north. A building of this shape could hardly have been original, since it would not have had the length from east to west to cover the arcade, which shows no trace of alteration. The arches of the arcade, of two chamfered orders, are supported on semi-octagonal responds and a central circular pier, having good moulded capitals of early fourteenth century type, varying slightly in section. The aisle itself was rebuilt in 1883 (a tablet records this, set below the Colepeper tomb in the west wall), and since it must have formed the connection between the monastic buildings and the Church, it would be of great interest to know if it has been rebuilt upon the old foundations. The present west wall of the aisle very nearly lines with the east wall of the north wing of the Priory, but we shall see that the windows in the vaulted chamber beneath this wing seem to preclude a junction with the Church other than angle-wise, or by a single wall. It seems not unlikely that a pentise or covered cloister walk was arranged against the east wall of the Priory, and this covered way may have been two storeys in height (*vide infra*, p. 9). There is room between the angle of the Priory building and the Church for a chapel of considerably larger size than the modern aisle, and it is possible that this (and not the north chapel) is the one referred to in

the schedule of dilapidations at the time of the death of Edward Dalingridge (17 Richard II. See Appendix). The chancel and the chapel are therein referred to as part of the Priory buildings.[1]

In Mr. Budgen's account of the history of the Priory that follows this it will be seen that we have to deal with a certain number of isolated periods when the prior was possessed of sufficient security to set his house in order, and repair or rebuild. In the intervals

SOUTH FRONT FROM FARMYARD.

between the prior was only in the position of a custodian for the king, or the buildings were let to farm, as, for instance, to Dalingridge, concerning whose tenancy occurs the document just quoted. After the suppression of the Priory comes the period 1413–1565, during which the manor was held by the Dean and Chapter of Chichester, the main part of the building being retained (or let to farm) as their manor house, and a portion being allocated to their vicar, the incumbent of the Church.[2] In 1565 the property goes to Sir Richard Sackville, one of whose tenants,

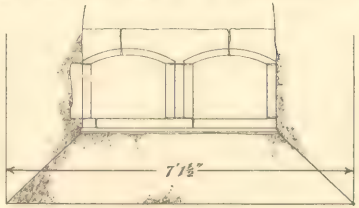
[1] The fittings of the Church have not been included in this account, which deals with the Priory. A complete survey of the Church must be left for a future occasion.

[2] See an interesting document (1541) given in Appendix II.

WILMINGTON PRIORY

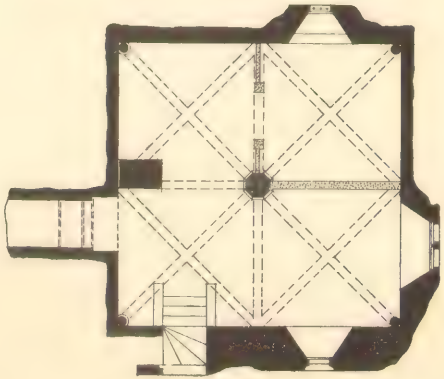
Details

Scale of Respond, etc 1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Feet
Scale of Plan, etc 5 0 10 15 20 25 Feet
Scale of Mouldings 1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Inches



Vault Window

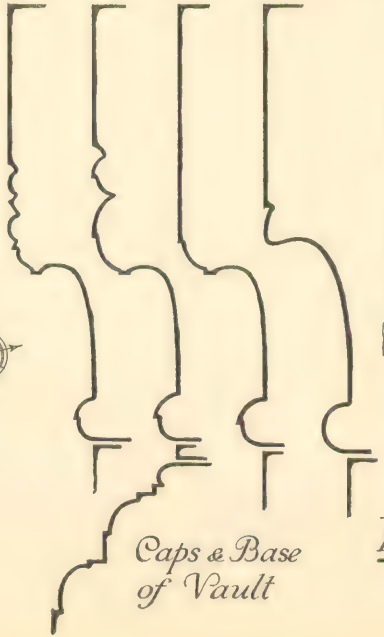
Section



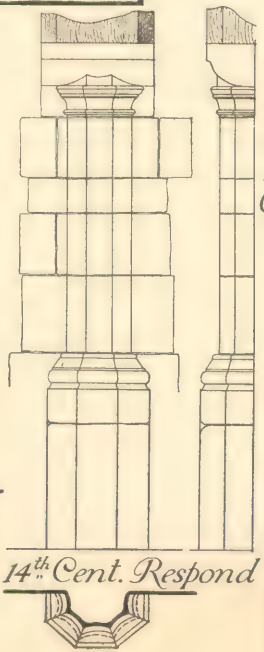
Plan

14th Century Oak Jamb

Corbel Molding



Caps & Base of Vault



14th Cent. Respond

14th Cen. Cap used as a Corbel

Mortar

Moulding of Respond

Elizabeth Colepeper, made a will (*S.A.C.*, Vol. XLVII., p. 64), which will be referred to later. About 1700 Spencer Compton inherits, and already early in the seventeenth century the vicarage had been re-absorbed in the manor house. So much may be said as a guide to the examination of the buildings, which have been uninhabited for many years and abandoned to the weather. During the last century much of the old work was removed and rebuilt, especially by Mr. Lamb, a tenant about 1827. His reconstructions have invested the eighteenth century drawings of S. H. Grimm (B.M. Burrell Collection) with all the greater value, and their reproduction here will be of real assistance in studying the remains.

No part of the twelfth century domestic buildings has come to light, but it has been possible to indicate on the plan the probable position of the great hall (a term, in this instance, to be preferred to that of "frater") built in the thirteenth century. This is no doubt the *magna vetus aula* of Bishop Day's Register (Appendix II.), although at that time, 1541, it was probably abandoned and possibly unroofed.

Beginning with the north wing of the Priory, we find here the walls of a roofless building of the fourteenth century, originally of two storeys in height, and, in addition, a fine vaulted apartment underground, which has the same dimensions as the superstructure from east to west, but extends beyond it to the south. The vault is of four compartments, each having heavy chamfered diagonal and transverse ribs (but no wall ribs) of greensand stone, perfectly cut, and supported upon a low central octagonal pier, and on angle shafts at the four corners, with moulded bell capitals. The filling is chalk, plastered with a coarse grit mortar, still in good condition. This vault dates from c. 1300, but is not so early as the hall, nor so late as the differently shaped building above it. It may have supported a solar wing of the early house.

From a point in the south wall of the vault, intermediate between the two southern compartments,

projects a short wing wall or pier, built apparently soon after the construction of the vault, and not otherwise attached, the purpose of which is quite clearly to support a pier above, which will be described later. In the south wall of the south-east compartment of the vault is a wide doorway with flat two-centred

VAULT UNDER N.E. WING, LOOKING SOUTH, SHOWING DOOR (LEFT), ADDITIONAL PIER (CENTRE) AND CENTRAL PIER (RIGHT).

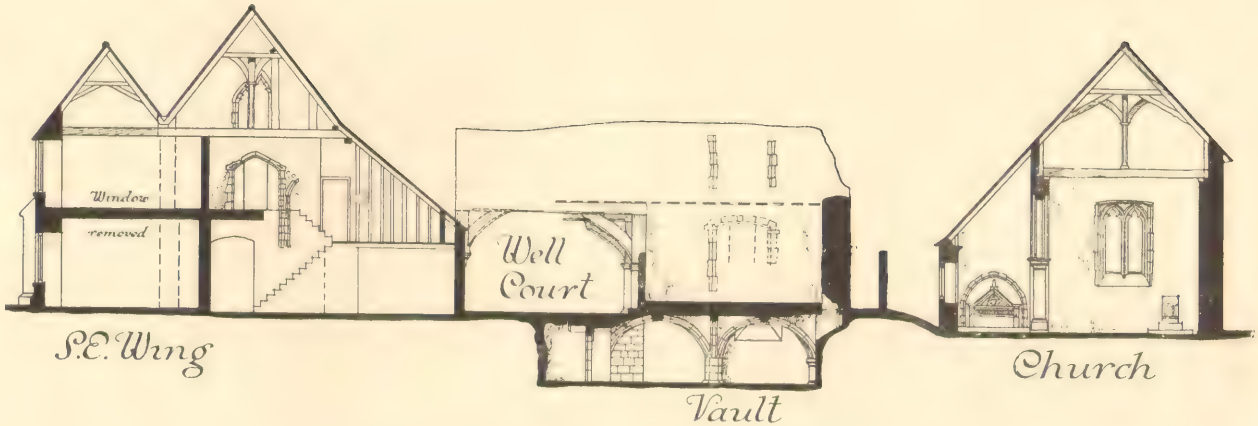
arch that gives now into a blind recess. In this recess is a second chamfered arch at a slightly higher level, and it is evident that at this point a broad staircase of stone led southwards to the ground floor. Its walls have been traced across the well-house court, but it is now filled up. This could not have been the only access to the vault, since the door here has been secured by an internal bar, the holes for which still exist. It was probably used for bringing stores into the vault, ordinary access being obtained by a vice or other-shaped stair in the east wall. The vaulted room

contains three contemporary rectangular windows, set high up and rebated for shutters. Two, of one light each, are in the west and east walls of the north-west and north-east compartments respectively, while the last-named compartment has an additional window of two lights looking north. These windows, it will be seen, would prevent a connection with the Church by an intermediate building, if their access to the open air were to be maintained, but the eastern light might quite reasonably have looked upon a cloister walk.

The superstructure over the vault has walls 3 feet 3 inches thick on the east, west and north, and these are set back at first floor level for the joists of the floor. The segmental rear arch of perhaps a two-light window in the east wall is still in position (it had fallen recently, but was immediately replaced), and there are remains of a similar opening in the west wall. There is a narrow fourteenth century doorway in the east wall, hard against the north end, and parts of a similar doorway exist just above it on the first floor—further evidence of a two-storey cloister walk on the outside, unless these doors indicate a staircase, which would suggest the intention of a dormitory above, from which access could be obtained to the Church for the night offices. At the upper level there are also evidences of windows above those below. The north wall has been a good deal altered, but the north-west quoin is intact near the ground. Against this wall the oven of the late farmhouse had been built, but there is a row of corbels on the outside suggesting an external chimney-stack to the upper floor.

The south wall is something of a puzzle. It is very thin, scarcely 12 inches thick, and is of worked stone with a shallow recess, about the size of a door, at the west end. At its eastern end is a doorway leading into the area which now contains the modern well-house. The doorway, or rather its eastern post, stood midway between the remains of two doors in the east wall, one in the building over the vault and the other in the well-house court. The south jamb of

WILMINGTON PRIORY



Section looking West

the latter, of good fourteenth century moulded greensand stone (two hollows separated by a fillet), and a portion of the springer of the arch are in position and stand by the entrance to the present modern stairs to the undercroft. The north jamb of the other doorway, with half its arch (one archstone) of chamfered chalk, is of different character, but probably of the same date. It seems likely that there was a projecting vice or other type of stair in the position of the modern steps, and that they led both down to the vault and up to the first floor. If that were so these two adjacent doorways would be explained.

We are still, however, met with the problem of the thin stone wall, which is the north boundary of the well-house court, and which is part of the still greater difficulty that this area presents. This court (the old outer kitchen of the farmhouse, of which the fine chamfered chimney beam to the fireplace on the east side still stands disconsolate) occupies in all probability a part at least of the "old hall," though it is not now as wide as the hall, a slip being separated from it on the south side by a wall built mainly of Tudor or earlier brickwork. Its eastern wall, very much mutilated and repaired, contains a certain amount of ashlar, and seems to be on the original building line. Its western wall is a post-monastic work of mingled stone and brick, the story of which is not very clear. There will be occasion to return to this wall later, but here it should be noticed that it seems clearly to be on the line of one of the old hall roof trusses, and, indeed, it buries two of the triple shafts of a respond on the north (*see* plan and detail drawing). The western shaft of this respond is cut out for toothing into the masonry of the north wall of the hall, the foundations of which have been traced, together with the projecting footings for what was probably the support of yet another truss. The eastern shaft of the existing respond (or rather the capital, for the shaft is missing) evidently stood free, and may have formed part of the jamb of a doorway in the north wall of the hall.

In any case it would seem that the area (now the well-house court) was cut off from the thirteenth century hall, and it may first have been done when the new fourteenth century hall was built further to the west and the old hall had fallen into disuse. It was roofed by means of enormous oak trusses, the central one, of which a section of the wall post remains, being carried on a moulded stone corbel now set in the brickwork on the south, and on a semi-octagonal hollow-sided pier with moulded cap and base (c. 1400) inserted in the thin wall on the north and resting, as already noted, on the pier which was added to the undercroft below. The other truss adjoins and is embedded in the west wall. It is of composite construction with separate wall posts, tie beams and curved struts, resting on the two western capitals of the triple respond. At the west end of the south wall of this area is the chamfered stone jamb of an abandoned opening, and a little to the east is a good fourteenth century oak doorway, the frame square-headed and moulded with two quarter rounds divided by a fillet.

What was the function of this area which I have called the well-house court? In Mrs. Colepeper's will of 1606 there is mention of the "kitchen" and the "old kitchen"; the former easily recognisable as that which remained the kitchen of the farmhouse, and the latter almost certainly the room under discussion. After a careful consideration of all the possibilities of the plan, I have come to the conclusion that the probable explanation is to be found in the extract from Bishop Day's Register concerning the Vicarage in 1541, printed in Appendix II. The description of the Vicarage itself is a building at the east angle of the "great old hall," on the north side, measuring 30 feet east to west, and 18 feet north to south, and having rooms above and below. The north-east wing is exactly 30 feet in width, and if we measure 18 feet from its northern wall we shall leave room for a passage (*parvum curtilagium*) between it and the then north wall of the well-house court (*coquina*). The

last-named then becomes the kitchen, referred to as "newly erected" in 1541, a description that aptly fits its appearance, although it was evidently built of old materials, some of which were no doubt already *in situ*. The big trusses, which may even contain timbers from the roof of the old hall, were not designed to carry an upper room, and therefore fit the description of the kitchen, which was part of the Vicarage, and yet was to be used by the Dean and Chapter on occasion, since no doubt the medieval kitchen was already out of use. The passage or "small curtilage" enclosed between the Vicarage and the kitchen is rendered likely, not only by the dimensions before given, but by the character of the north wall of the kitchen, which has the appearance of a passage wall, and by the recess at its western end, which seems to mark the position of a former doorway communicating (perhaps by means of a lobby in the kitchen) with the ground to the west. Such an entrance would agree with the further grant of "ingress and egress to and from the said Vicarage by the gate on the north side of the newly built kitchen." No such grant would be required on the east side, as here lay the Vicarage garden, and the staircase already presumed at this point would have rendered an entrance impossible. It seems then that the well-house court represents the kitchen of the Vicarage, built by the Dean and Chapter a little before 1541, and used by them when they visited the manor.[3]

The east wall of the well-house court continues southwards as far as the line of the south wall of the "old hall," which here projects eastwards and forms the northern boundary of a building we will call the south-east wing. A pointed arched doorway of two flat chamfered arch stones, early fourteenth century in character, occurs at the south end of the east wall, and the arch is partly buried in the return wall of the wing. The archway, which would have opened into the hall if the latter extended so far east, is clearly earlier than

[3] The Rev. G. M. Cooper suggests a different position for the Vicarage.

the wing, which is faced on the north side with a chequerwork of flint and stone, forming for some 8 feet high a projection from the face of the wall. This projection suggests the set-off for a roof such as has already been suggested for a covered way to the Church, but there are no clear indications of its purpose. It seems rather to have been a re-facing to an older chalk wall, partly under-pinning and supporting it, and trespassing on the older doorway the southern jamb of which it replaced.[4]

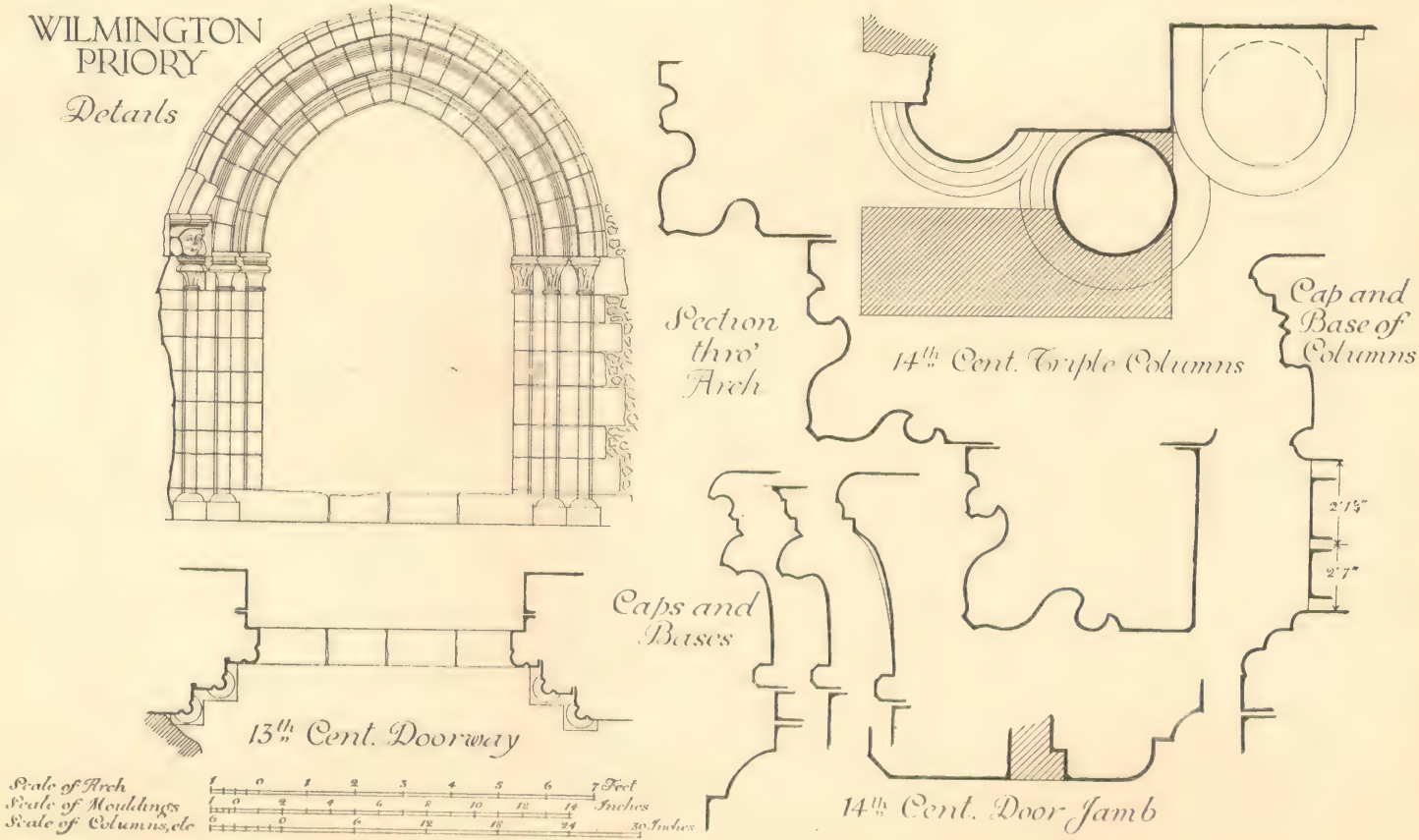
The wing itself is of curious shape. Its greater length is now from north to south, and the whole of its western wall was an external one before the suppression. It abuts for half its width on the "old hall" (or its extension) on the north, and on the south it was also free of buildings, having two buttresses at the south-west angle and one buttress at the south-east. It is more difficult to see what has happened on its eastern side, much of the wall having fallen away. It appears, however, that its northern portion (about two-thirds) extended further east; an arrangement indicated by the mortices in the purlin of the roof, of which one truss, with king post and moulded cap, still spans this part from north to south. The extension is confirmed by the foundations of the walls which Mr. Budgen has uncovered (*see* Plan). The irregular line of the eastern wall, which was flint faced, also suggests a later build to close the gap when the remaining part was demolished, but there are curious remains of a rebated series of openings in this wall, perhaps some form of screen. The south part of the east wall is square with the south front, and this southern section of the building is roofed separately with trussed rafters without principals.

In the northern part of the west wall of the wing, on the upper floor, the rear arch of a very interesting fourteenth century window has been discovered, and

[4] It is probably modern, as it differs in character from the flint and stone work above, and it bears the initials of Mr. Lamb and an early nineteenth century date.

alongside it the southern jamb and part of the arch of a doorway. The window arch and the plastered splays are complete, and the springers of the former are made of large stones, in each of which is carved a little sunk and shaped spandrel. The former tenant of Wilmington Farm remembers another window in the west wall, further south, which fell down some years ago when the walls were built up with brickwork. This is probably referred to in the paragraph in *S.A.C.*, IV., p. 63, concerning the sitting room "called the chapel," which had windows "of arched stone," and an "arched roof of wood," the latter being the trussed rafters in this part of the roof. The door next to the window described above seems to have led to a passage or gallery, which perhaps ran over a like feature along the south side of the "old hall." The plaster reveal of the door continues right through the wall, and appears to suggest a continuation beyond. This gallery would have led to the east wall of the prior's chapel, where the lower part of the north jamb of a door is still *in situ*. An alternative explanation would be that both doors are evidence of original and separate staircases. The only other feature which can be recognised is a small arched doorway with chamfered jambs and arch stones in the south part of the east wall. Some of the stones are displaced. Just north of this are two irregular openings through the wall (now bricked up), where the plastering is still visible. One of these openings is at first floor and the other at ground floor level, and the upper is not directly over the lower. They suggest a rudely shaped winding stair.

Returning now to the "Old Hall," the site of which is chiefly open ground, we can examine its most important remaining feature—the south door. Until recently this doorway was entirely bricked up and unknown. It consists of three fully moulded orders to the arch of early thirteenth century date, supported on three shafts at each side. There is a curious difference in the capitals of these shafts, the three

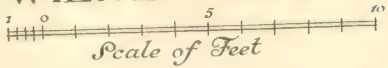

WILMINGTON PRIORY
Details
Section thro' Arch
14th Cent. Triple Columns
Cap and Base of Columns
2' 1¼"
2' 7"
Caps and Bases
13th Cent. Doorway
14th Cent. Door Jamb
Scale of Arch 1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Feet
Scale of Mouldings 1 0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 Inches
Scale of Columns, etc 6 0 6 12 18 24 30 Inches

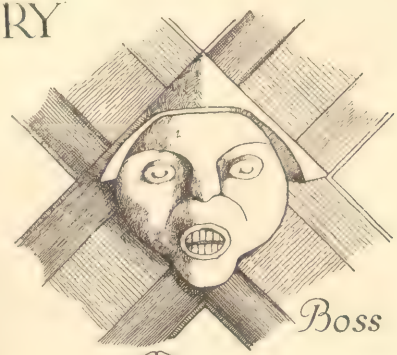
eastern ones having been carved with foliage, two of the western ones being plain moulded bell capitals, and

13th Century Door to Old Hall (from inside).

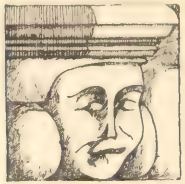
the third (the westernmost) moulded, but octagonal. It is not unusual to work the circle from the octagon

WILMINGTON PRIORY

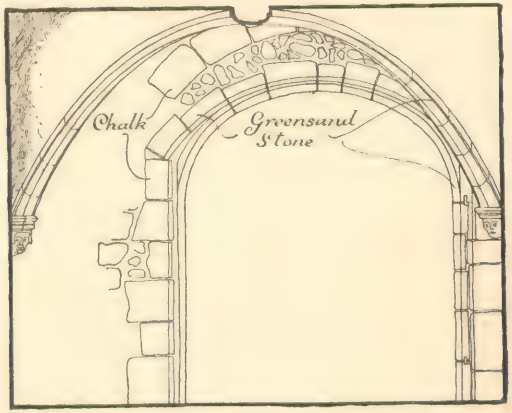




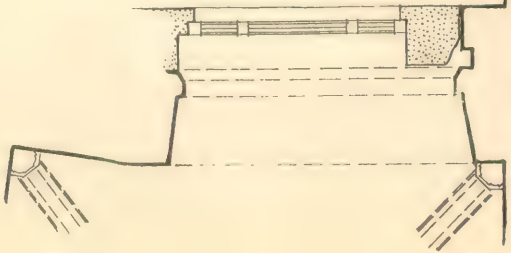
Boss

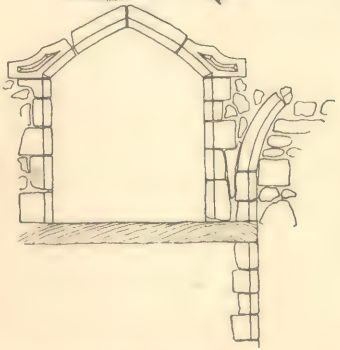


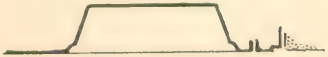
Corbels



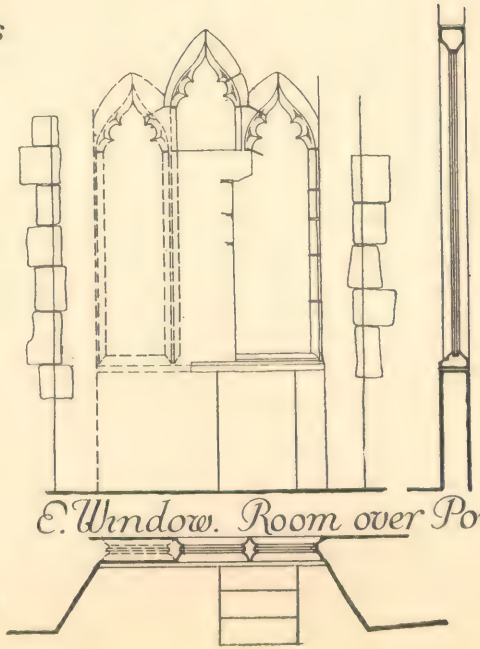
14th Cent. S. Door of Porch







Blocked Window & Door Jamb (S.E. Wing W. Wall)



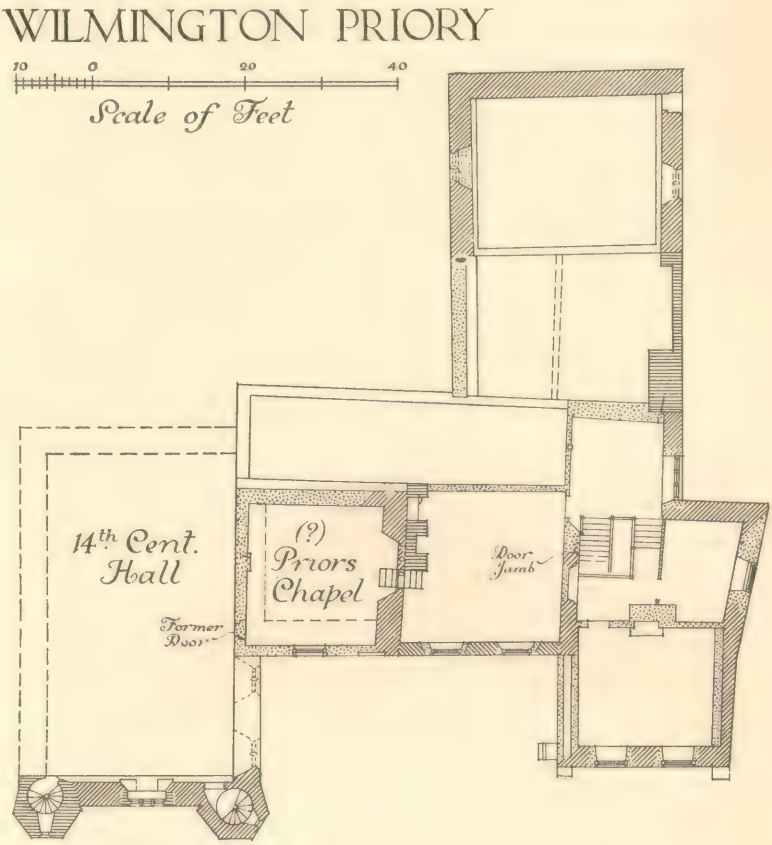
E. Window. Room over Porch

and again to enrich the plain moulded capital, so that the explanation might be that we have here interrupted workmanship.

That the door, however, was a principal entrance is made clear by the elaborate vaulted gatehouse that stood before it. This is a two-storied building, much altered since S. H. Grimm made his drawing for the Burrell Collection (see illustration), but still retaining the main features that show it to have served as a roomy porch below and a chapel adjoining the new prior's hall above. As it stands the building is in the main of the fourteenth century, and no regard has been shown for the beautiful early doorway in setting out its present walls and its vault. The vault and the new entrance in the south wall of the porch were evidently built when the new upper hall was erected in the fourteenth century, and exigencies of space threw the porch too far east to allow of a proper combination with the old door. The vault ribs are carried on four corbels, carved with masks, at the angles of the porch, and one corbel has been ruthlessly thrust through the moulded archstones, and rests on the westernmost capital and shaft of the door. From this the vault springs, and hides from view a considerable segment of the old archway.

When we turn to the outer doorway (in the south wall of the porch) we see a similar clash between vault and archway, though here the fourteenth century segmental inner arch just clears the vault itself. But the chalk relieving arch above is cut completely by the vault, and since this chalk arch and much of the chalk walling of the porch itself are very similar to the wall of the thirteenth century hall, it may be that there was a porch here which was contemporary with the early hall door, and that it was enlarged at the same time as the later hall. This suggestion, which I owe chiefly to Mr. A. W. Clapham, is perhaps confirmed by the *applied* outer orders of the archway shown in Grimm's drawing. The external arch has disappeared, but the rear arch, which had lost several

stones, and was on the point of falling, has been made secure by the Society during this last year. The diagonal vaulting ribs (there are no wall ribs) meet at a centre point in a boss carved with a mask, which is



First Floor Plan

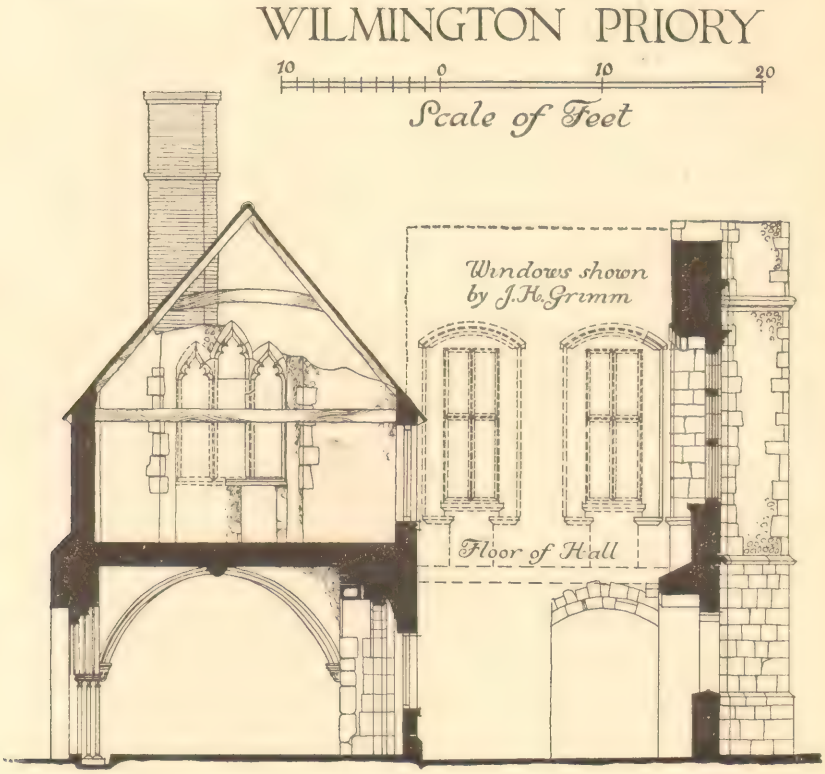
very similar to those at Michelham. The ribs themselves are broad with moulded angles. The west wall of the porch has been largely rebuilt and a chimney inserted, but the left-hand reveal of a window has survived, with the holes for iron bars, and probably

represents a communicating hatch with the building to the west.

The room above the porch communicated with the fourteenth century upper hall, which will be described directly, but the communicating door, which can be plainly seen on Grimm's drawing, has disappeared. The whole of the west and south walls have been rebuilt in the upper portions, and nothing can be gleaned from the north wall, which is partly a reconstruction and is chiefly in chalk. The east wall, however, in spite of the insertion of a chimney-stack (to which is still attached the iron wheel for turning the spit), retains a considerable part of the three-light window that opened to the east. The splays of this window continue to the brick floor over the vault below and show the majority of their greensand stone quoins. The rear arch has gone, but two of the three lights, with ogee heads and cusped cinqfoils are in position, together with the south jamb. The centre light rises above those at the side, and they must have made a graceful composition in the old east gable, which is just visible in Grimm's drawing. The re-roofing of this part of the building in modern times has obscured the old arrangement. There was a pleasant little corbel table of brick over the windows in this gable, which, unfortunately, fell before it could be secured.

We have noticed that the principal remains of the Priory belong to the fourteenth century, and the chief of these has yet to be described. This is the large hall on the first floor, with apartments below, of which the south end and part of the east wall alone remain. It appears much more completely in the two drawings by S. H. Grimm from the Burrell Collection, for at the end of the eighteenth century when these drawings were made the two eastern side windows had not fallen. The present appearance of the building, showing a lofty wall with polygonal staircase towers at each side and a modern opening below, has led most visitors (and former writers) to take it for a gatehouse, but it is quite clear that it was an upper hall, probably

some 42 feet by 24 feet in size.[5] The ground floor, or undercroft, had a doorway, of which the relieving arches and traces of the jambs remain on the east side, and there seems also to have been a door leading into



Section thro' Porch, etc.

THIS SECTION IS TAKEN ON THE LINES A-B, B-C ON GROUND PLAN.

the "old hall." To the south (and on the west, doubtless) were windows. Two spiral staircases were contained in the south turrets, but there would have been a principal stair, probably to the north, in the proximity of the kitchens. Of the south window of the

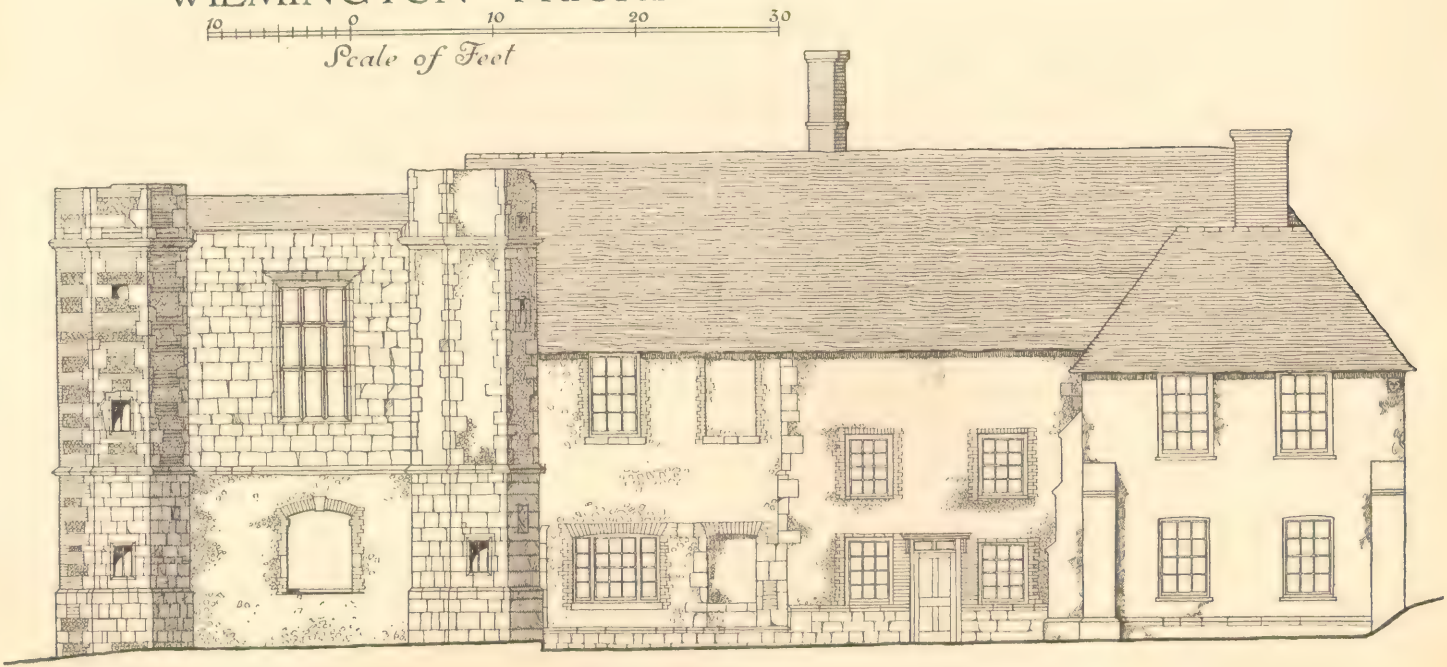
[5] The foundations of the north wall have been traced, but the upper hall may have extended further.

hall only the fourteenth century rear arch remains with the sill and characteristic stone seats of the

INTERIOR OF S. WALL OF 14TH CENTURY HALL.

period. The mullions and transomes, as also the classical moulded cornice to the window on the outside, show alterations in the post-monastic period, which

WILMINGTON PRIORY

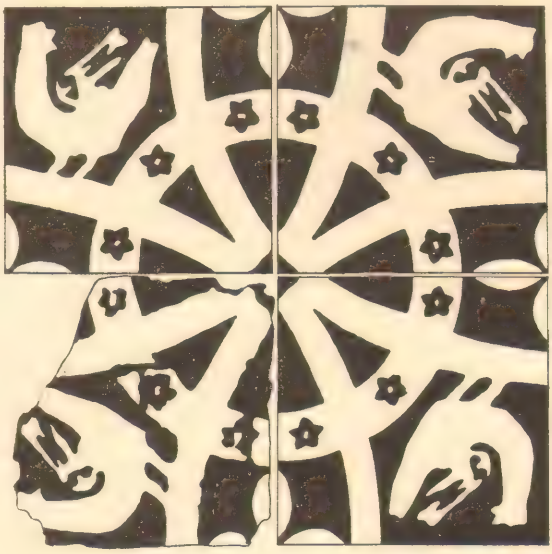


South Elevation

were similarly carried out in the case of the other windows, as seen in Grimm's drawing. When the building was taken in hand by the Dean and Chapter of Chichester it no doubt needed a good deal of repair, and the western stair turret had to be rebuilt. Bricks were then used for the infilling instead of flint, and a Tudor flavour was imparted to the whole. It appears likely, too, that the west wall fell and was replaced by timber framing. This hall has been a ruin now for certainly a century and a half.

In the foregoing description details have been given of the south-east wing, and the porch with the Prior's Hall to the south-west, each of which projected southwards from the "Old Hall" of the thirteenth century. Part of the space between these wings was enclosed perhaps as early as 1500, but certainly by the Sackville occupation, giving an odd effect of varying roofs well shown in Grimm's drawing, until in the nineteenth century the whole centre portion was re-roofed in one span. The sequence of building events in this area is a little difficult to follow. The south wall of the "Old Hall," which contains the fine doorway towards its western end, seems to have been reconstructed in the fourteenth century, for at its eastern end is a door jamb with the splays outwards (i.e. toward the south), indicating that there was an entrance to either a ground floor chamber, a staircase, or perhaps a covered way beneath the passage we postulated above. The fellow of this door jamb appears to have been refixed (for it can scarcely be another *in situ*) to form part of the large open fireplace to the modern kitchen which came to occupy this centre position between the wings. The chimney beam, a fine piece of oak, extends right across the jamb, and is carefully cut to follow the mouldings of the stone work. This kitchen and the room over it (both mentioned in Mrs. Colepeper's will, 1606), which occupy the space on to which windows from the two wings originally looked, have a south wall faced with flint, which was built in line with the gatehouse buttress shown on Grimm's drawing. The

splays of two pairs of windows, one pair on each floor, are still to be seen, but the windows themselves have been replaced by sashes. The alteration to the south wall of the gatehouse or porch will be best



FLOOR TILES FROM WILMINGTON PRIORY.

appreciated by comparing Grimm's drawing with the measured drawing of the south elevation.

There are one or two other small matters to be noticed. Just by the lower steps of the eighteenth

century stair in the south-east wing is a small square-headed light looking westwards to the former court. There is another fragment of a late stone window (probably Tudor) in the west wall of the well-house court, also looking westwards, which was no doubt inserted after the thirteenth century hall had disappeared.

A very large number of architectural fragments are on the site awaiting identification—portions of windows and doors predominating. There is a corbel carved with a head fixed under the eaves of the south wall of the south-east wing at its eastern end, and another is preserved among the fragments—both, no doubt, twelfth century. Only half a dozen floor tiles with any indication of design have been found, the more interesting being illustrated here. These are preserved at the museum at Barbican House, Lewes. The house received certain improvements in the eighteenth century, and among the features of this date should be mentioned the staircase in the south-east wing, with its balustrade of a Chinese interlacing pattern, and an interesting circular backed cupboard formed of wood blocks, furnished with shaped shelves and a well-designed front.

The plans and drawings accompanying this article have been made by Mr. E. F. Harvey under my direction. The photographs have been kindly taken by Mr. Budgen.

From a drawing by S. H. Grimm (18th cent.)

W. END OF WILMINGTON PRIORY, SHOWING INTERIOR OF 14TH CENTURY HALL.

WILMINGTON PRIORY: HISTORICAL NOTES.

By the Rev. W. BUDGEN, F.S.A.

The village of Wilmington, lying on the north side of the Downs nearly mid-way between Lewes and Eastbourne, is widely known, at least by name, through its association with the great hill-side figure, the "Giant" or "Long Man" of Wilmington. Less well known, but more important in historical and archæological interest, is the group of buildings, partly in ruins, close to the parish church on the south side, which consist almost entirely of remains of the medieval Priory of Wilmington. As Mr. W. H. Godfrey has mentioned in his architectural description, the Priory buildings—and also the "Long Man"—are now vested in the Sussex Archæological Trust with a view to their preservation. It would have been a serious loss if the buildings had been allowed to become derelict. Apart from their inherent value as thirteenth and fourteenth century work, these remains of the old Priory have an interest that should reach far beyond the immediate locality, for they constitute practically the only visible memorial of the sometime important Benedictine Abbey of St. Mary of Grestain in Normandy to which the Priory, with possessions in many parts of England, belonged. While the English priory, with the other alien priories, came to an end in 1414, the Norman abbey continued until 1757, but its buildings have been demolished and its archives have perished.

The association of the Abbey with England was of the closest character. At one time a large proportion of its revenues was derived from English estates; the Abbot held a prebendal stall in Chichester Cathedral; and in the thirteenth century one of the abbots spent

nearly two years continuously in England, thereby incurring a severe reprimand from his Norman Diocesan for the neglect of his abbey and the scandal resulting therefrom.

The Abbey owed its foundation to Herluin de Contaville, a man of whom little is known personally, but whose family came into great prominence through their connection with William the Conqueror. William, as is well known, was the illegitimate son of Robert, Duke of Normandy, who was variously nicknamed "le Magnifique," "le Liberal," or "le Diable," according to the mood of the moment. William's mother, Arlette, later became the wife of Herluin de Contaville, and by this marriage there were two sons, Robert of Mortain and Odo, afterwards Bishop of Bayeux, both of them active participants in the councils of their half-brother, the Conqueror, and sharers in the spoils of the Conquest. Of the two brothers the interest of Sussex is centred in Robert of Mortain, for, besides receiving many manors elsewhere in England, he was one of the five companions of William between whom the county of Sussex was divided, Robert's portion being the Rape of Pevensey.

Liberal in his benefactions to the Abbey of his father's foundation, his gifts included manors and lands both in Normandy and England. Among the latter the manor of Wilmington with its associated lands was one of the more important, and, being conveniently situated for communication with Normandy, the Priory founded there became the responsible head of all the English estates of the Abbey.

The Priory and its history have been dealt with in some detail by the Rev. G. M. Cooper in Vol. IV. of our *Collections*, but additional material has become available during the 74 years since that paper was written. Further, Mr. Cooper said little about the history of the Abbey apart from Wilmington, and we feel that for a right appreciation of the story of our Priory some knowledge of the course of events concerning the mother house in Normandy is essential. The

material for this is now accessible in a monograph on the Abbey by a French writer, M. Chas. Bréard, published in 1904,[1] in which all the available information from the Norman side is brought together. M. Bréard tells, with regret, that in the absence of the Abbey archives, which appear to have perished, he has had to rely for many of his details upon the *Neustria Pia* and *Gallia Christiana*, the compilers of which had access to documents no longer in existence. He has collected a large number of historical documents from various sources, extending from 1189 to 1790, but, curiously, the English records have been almost entirely neglected. With one or two small exceptions, the two confirmatory Charters of Richard I. and Edward II. are the only documents he gives from English sources, and there is not even a suggestion of the existence of a priory at Wilmington, or of its suppression.

As the best way of dealing with a rather complicated matter, we propose to combine in chronicle form the story of the Abbey and Priory, including such information as may be material from M. Bréard's book.

1050. The Abbey was founded at Grestain on the site of a chapel dedicated to the Virgin and endowed by Herluin de Contaville.[2]

1066–1086. Between the date of the Conquest and the compilation of Domesday Book the Abbey was further endowed. English estates were given by the Conqueror and by Robert of Mortain and his wife, Maud de Montgomery, their donations including manors, tithes and churches in Sussex, Northants, Bucks, Suffolk and Cambs. The Domesday survey shows the Abbey holding manors and lands in these various counties.

c. 1100. Robert of Mortain died about 1100,[3] his

[1] *L'Abbaye de Notre Dame de Grestain,* par Charles Bréard, Rouen, A. Lestringant, Libraire, 1904. I have to thank Miss Rose Graham, F.S.A., for calling my attention to this important work.

[2] Bréard, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

[3] His son William appears as Count of Mortain in documents dated by Dr. Round 1100–1104. *Cal. Docts., France.*

first wife Maud having predeceased him between 1085 and 1088.[4] Both were buried in the Abbey at Grestain. Their son William, Count of Mortain, succeeded to the estates and added to the Abbey endowments property both in England and Normandy, but having embraced the cause of Robert, Duke of Normandy, who rose in opposition to his brother, Henry I., he was taken prisoner at the battle of Tenchebrai in 1106, and his estates were forfeited. M. Bréard says that his eyes were put out, and that after 30 years (nearly) of close captivity he died in 1134.

1122. The village and Abbey of Grestain were destroyed by fire, which appears to have been accidental, but the next year, in consequence of a revolt in the district, the country round was ravaged by Henry I., and it is improbable that Grestain escaped.[5]

1139. Dedication of the second portion—probably the nave—of the new church of Grestain. The choir had been consecrated previously, and the cemetery received benediction, 1141–42.[6]

1180. William Huband (or de Exeter) became the fifth Abbot. Almost immediately he came over to England and remained for nearly two years "given up to worldly occupations." At the peremptory command of the Bishop of Liseux he returned to Grestain, but very soon crossed to England again. He was again severely reprimanded and threatened with ex-communication. The condition of affairs in the Abbey was scandalous. Letters addressed by the Bishop to the Abbot and also to the Pope, Alexander III., are given by M. Bréard. In 1185 the Abbot was removed to a less important House, and some of the monks were also "translated" elsewhere.[7] Having regard to the alternative surname given to this Abbot, it is noticeable that in the gifts to the Abbey confirmed by the charter of Edward II. in 1316 there is one by Robert de Spire of a house in Exeter, which the Abbey held of him, with $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres of land. It is possible that we have an

[4] Bréard, p. 22.
[5] Bréard, pp. 37, 38, quoting from *Neustria Pia.*
[6] *Ibid.*, 36, 42.
[7] *Ibid.*, 44–56.

echo of the Abbot's "worldly" activities in the Pipe Rolls for the years 1184–1186, where the Abbot of Grestene is entered as owing half a mark for encroachment in the county of Southants. Under the heading of the counties of Bucks. and Beds. the sheriff accounts for 16s. 8d. rent from the Abbot of Gresteng (*sic*).

1189–1197. RAOUL is Abbot. He is said to have been the nominee of Richard I., and from this monarch he obtained two charters confirming gifts made to the Abbey, one relating to their estates in Normandy, the other to the Abbey's English possessions.

1197. ROBERT becomes Abbot.[8] It was during his abbacy that the Prebend of Wilmington in Chichester Cathedral was created by the then bishop, Seffrid II. (1180–1204). The Abbot, desiring to become a Canon, gave to the Cathedral the church of Ferles (West Firle); a prebend was constituted out of the churches of Wilmington, Willingdon and Eastdean (near Eastbourne) and given to the Abbot and his successors, with a stall in the choir.[9] The churches of Wilmington and Eastdean already belonged to the Abbey, and apparently Willingdon was added by way of exchange for Firle. As the Abbot could not keep residence in the cathedral in person he was to appoint a priest-vicar, who should receive from his master the same stipend as the other canons' vicars (i.e. 1 mark), but out of the common fund he was to have 25s. (yearly) instead of the customary 13s. 4d.[10] This prebend is now represented by the Bursalis prebend.[11] It must have been before this transfer of Firle Church to the Cathedral that Robert, the Abbot, and the Convent of Grestain granted to William de Coleville a dwelling (*herbergagium*) next the chancel of the church of Ferles at a rent of 12d. yearly to the church.[12]

The position in regard to Willingdon Church is made clear in the ordinance creating the vicarage in 1204 by Simon, Bishop of Chichester. This document recites

[8] Bréard, p. 61.
[9] Swainson, *Hist. & Constitutions of Chichester Cath.*, p. 26.
[10] *Ibid.* [11] *S.A.C.*, XXIX., 32. [12] Firle Muniments.

that "following in the footsteps" of his predecessor, Seffrid, the Bishop had granted the church of Willingdon to the Abbot and Convent of Grestain, and had instituted Robert the Abbot as rector thereof.[13]

This same Abbot was concerned in an arrangement with Richard de Cumbe and Sibyl his wife, by which the Abbey remitted their right in the church of Westdene (near Eastbourne), except in regard to a portion of 12s. yearly from the church, and Richard de Cumbe and Sibyl in like manner remitted to the Abbey all their right in Friston Church.[14]

1230. WILLIAM DE FARNOVILLE is Abbot. There is a discrepancy between the French and English records as to the date of the termination of Robert's abbacy. M. Bréard states that he was present at the Assizes held in 1244,[15] which would make his tenure of the office extend for 46 years. On the other hand, we have a Fine of the year 1230, in which William, Abbot of Grestain, receives a quit-claim concerning 137 acres of land in Westham.[16]

1243. JOHN is Prior of Wilmington. This is the first mention we have of a Prior. His name, with that of the Abbot William, occurs in connection with the purchase by the Abbey of 40 acres of land in Westham,[17] in which parish the Abbey already had considerable possessions. These formed the manor of Peelings, to which the Rectory of the church of Westham was attached.

1254. Consecration of the church of the Abbey at Grestain by the Bishop of Liseux. According to M. Bréard (p. 64) this was a new edifice, and not the church that was commenced in 1122. It existed in part until the suppression of the Abbey in 1757.

Important information as to the state of the Church in Normandy at this period is furnished by the Journal of Odo Rigaud, Archbishop of Rouen. He visited Grestain three times between 1249 and 1257, and

[13] Add. MSS. 5706, f. 345. [14] *Sussex Fines*, 47.
[15] *Op. cit.*, p. 63, quoting from Cartulaire de Jumièges.
[16] *Sussex Fines*, 260. [17] *Ibid.*, 416.

found nothing seriously amiss. The number of monks varied from 28 in 1254 to 32 in 1257, nearly all of them being priests. The yearly revenues of the Abbey were 2000 pounds *tournois* (i.e. about £500) in 1249, and £400 in 1257. The keeping of accounts was enjoined. It was reported that the monks living in the priories ate flesh and did not observe fasts; this was to be corrected. The Abbot was old and blind and could take no part in the Offices, but every Sunday he received the Communion.[18]

1259. THOMAS is Abbot.[19] The text of a grant by the Abbey, in his time, of land in Willingdon has been preserved in private hands in an Elizabethan copy.[20] It is dated in 1261; the Abbey grants to Philip de Tottescompe all the lands which Richard de Tottescompe, his father, sometime held of the Abbey in the parish of Willingdon at Tottescompe, except an acre which Thomas de Tottescomp, uncle of Philip, held. Yearly rent at Wilmington, 5s. Witnesses:—Richard de Hideney, Alexr. de Racton (Ratton), Ralph de Colvyll (a donor to the Abbey), Richard and William de Hamme, Richard Saget, John Campreys brethren, John de Wybe, Will. Turgis. An extent of the property was made on the death of Jop de Tottescomp in 1333,[21] and it can be clearly identified with a freehold tenement held of Wilmington manor by Robert Parker of Ratton in 1673, described as a messuage farm and lands called Totscombe alias Tascombe, containing 100 acres in Willingdon, at a rent of 5s.[22] It is now represented by a farm called Chalk Farm lying at the foot of the Downs below a combe still marked on the O.S. as Tascombe.

1261. ROBERT PYKARD is Prior of Wilmington. He and John le Merse, parson of "Bercamsted," are authorised to appoint attornies in the Abbot's name.[23]

In 1267 the Archbishop of Rouen again visited Grestain. Twenty-six monks were in residence there,

[18] Bréard, 65–67. See Note 53, *post.* as to the value of the £ *tournois.*
[19] *Ibid.*, 70. [20] Gildredge Titles to Lands. [21] Inq. p.m.
[22] Compton Place Muniments. [23] *Cal. Pat. Rolls.*

two were in England, and two at each of the priories in France. The Abbot was enjoined to visit the foreign priories more frequently.[24] This statement in regard to the two monks in England is one of the important pieces of information we have been able to gather from the French records. The Abbey was at this time probably at the height of its prosperity, and yet there were only two monks at Wilmington. We may, therefore, conclude that this was the normal number to be resident there, and it would seem that their main business was the management of the Abbey estates in this country.[25]

1268. WILLIAM DE GYMEGES (? Jumièges) is Prior.[26] If the name of this Prior is as suggested, implying possibly that he was a monk of the Abbey of Jumièges, it is of interest, for in 1259 a long-standing dispute between Jumièges and Grestain was settled to the advantage of the latter house.[27]

1270. REYNOLD is Prior.[28]

In 1294 trouble arose with France, and, in anticipation of war, it appears that the English possessions of the alien priories were taken into the king's hands. Then, in 1295, it was ordered that all the members of these alien religious houses dwelling within 13 miles of the sea should be removed and placed in other religious houses, under strict supervision, at least 20 miles from the sea. Under this ordinance the Abbot of Chertsey was directed to receive the Prior of Wilmington into his house.[29] If this arrangement was actually carried out it was of short duration, for in the following year, 1296, protection was granted to the Prior on condition of paying a certain sum annually to the Exchequer.[30]

[24] Bréard, p. 73.

[25] This seems to have been quite usual in alien priories, e.g. at Coggs and Minster Lovel, alien priories in Oxfordshire, in each case two foreigners resided, who were sent over for a few years to look after the English property and then were re-called. H. Salter, Introduction to *Newington Longeville Charters*, Oxfordshire Records Society, 1921, *per inf.* Miss Rose Graham, F.S.A.

[26] *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Hen. III. [27] Bréard, p. 72.

[28] *V.C.H., Sussex*, II., 122, quoting Ass. Roll, 913 m. 7d.

[29] *Cal. Fine Rolls*, where the full Ordinance is given. [30] *Cal. Pat. Rolls.*

1297. The alien priories were restored.[31]

1299. WILLIAM is Prior of Wilmington. He and the parson of the Church of Bledlaw (belonging to the priory) received letters of protection while going to the Abbot beyond the sea.[32]

1302. RAOUL VINCOND (elected Abbot in 1297) was dismissed on complaint of the monks. There were serious disorders among the regular clergy in diocese of Liseux, the Grestain monks were reduced to a very small number, and they remained without an Abbot until 1308.[33]

1308. WILLIAM LE VAVASOUR elected Abbot.[34] It would appear that during the vacancy the English estates of the Abbey, seized in 1294, had remained in the king's hands, for immediately on the appointment of the new Abbot there is an order to the escheator to deliver the property of the Abbey to him.[35] Just as happened after the previous period of disorder in the Abbey, so now, steps were taken to secure its possessions and to have its rights declared. In March, 1314–15, the Abbot obtained a grant of free-warren in the abbey manors of Wilmington, Jevington (i.e. Broughton in Jevington) and Alfriston (Frogfirle),[36] and in the same year William de Warrenne granted to the Abbey the customs and freedom of Seaford.[37]

In 1316 the Abbey received from Edward II. a charter confirming by Inspeximus the important charter granted by Richard I. in 1189, and also confirming subsequent gifts.[38] M. Bréard gives this charter *in extenso*, but dates it wrongly, 1308.[39] He also misunderstands its import, for, not finding therein any reference to many of the English manors mentioned in the 1189 charter, he assumes that the Abbey no longer possessed them. In this he is entirely mistaken, as will appear later, in fact, the very next matter of

[31] *Cal. Pat. Roll.* [32] *Ibid.* [33] Bréard, p. 77. [34] *Ibid.*
[35] *Cal. Close Rolls*, p. 40. [36] *Charter Roll*, 8 Edw. II., m. 20.
[37] *S.A.C.*, XVII., 145.
[38] *Charter Roll*, 9 Edw. II., No. 21. The text of the earlier charter is only known from this Inspeximus.
[39] *Op. cit.*, p. 224.

importance in the French documents to which he refers is the exchange, 50 years later, of seven of the supposed lost manors for a valuable estate in Normandy.

1320. WILLIAM (de Blanville or Bauville) is Prior.[40]

A very small incident in the management of the property of the Priory at this period affords a passing glimpse of the domestic establishment maintained by the Prior. He had occasion to make a seizure of the goods and chattels of one of the Abbey tenants at Hellingly, probably by way of distress for rent; and this led to a law-suit by the tenant, William de Norbleton. The Prior and those who made the seizure were the defendants, and among them were at least five persons, whose names indicate that they were servants of the Priory, viz., Henry le Priouresporter, Richard le Priouresporter, William le Priouresporter, Richard le Prioureskeu and Roger le Priouresspalfrayman.[41] But the period of peaceful possession was not long.

1324. In anticipation of further warlike operations with France the alien priories were again seized in 18 Edw. II. (1324), and the Returns of the Commissioners who carried out the seizure are preserved showing the value of the possessions of the priories on October 8 in that year.[42] The goods and chattels of the Wilmington House in their manors of Wilmington, Frogferles (in Alfriston), "Nunington" (probably a mistake for Jevington) and Palyngg (Peeling in Westham) were valued at £300 18s. 11d.—quite a considerable sum. No particulars are given of the manors themselves for the reason that they had been delivered to the Prior as custodian for the King, and we learn from the Pipe Roll of the following year that the annual payment to be made by the Prior for having the custody was £170.[43] On the accession of Edward III. in 1327 the fealty due from the Abbot of Grestain to the King for the English manors was received in Normandy by the Abbot of Bec Helouin under a

[40] *Cal. Pat. Rolls.* [41] *Ibid.* [42] Add. MSS. 6164, ff. 466, 471.
[43] *Pipe Roll,* 19 Edw. II.

special authority from the King.[44] This was doubtless in connection with the restoration of the Abbey possessions, which were held in peace for 20 years.

In 1337 the Hundred Years War with France began, and once more the lands and goods of the alien priories were taken into the King's hands. The custody of Wilmington Priory and its property was committed to the Prior at the same rent as before, £170, for which grant he apparently paid £70 in cash.[45] He was in arrear with his rent in the following year (1338), and it would seem that he excused himself on the ground that he was being pressed for the payment of pre-war debts. At all events, in August of that year the Sheriff of Middlesex was ordered to desist from distraining the Prior for debts, so that he might be able to answer for the rent due to the King.[46] Five years later the rent had been increased to £200, the Prior to be thereby exempted from all further exactions, charges and impositions. His sureties were Andrew de Medested, chivaler, William de Cessingham and Philip de Endlenewyk, all well known in the district.[47]

In 1343 the exercise of the royal right of Purveyance provided the Prior (still William de Bauville) with a partial "set-off" against the rent due from him, and incidentally it affords some indication of the resources of the Priory at the time. Geoffrey de Say, Admiral of the Fleet, took from Wilmington 19 "beeves" worth £13 6s., and 140 "muttons" worth £7. Henry de Boucy took 8 sacks and 10 cloves of wool worth £32 15s., and John de Ratynden took 6½ sacks and 2 cloves of wool worth £26 3s. The King gave letters to the Prior promising to pay these amounts.[48]

1344–5. William de Bauvill, the Prior, having died, the custody of the priory was granted to John Megre, monk,[49] and shortly afterwards to Peter Crispyn, who

[44] *Cal. Close Rolls*, 16 Feb., 1327, and 7 May, 1328. The Abbot of Bec had a manor in Beddingham, where Wilmington also possessed lands.

[45] *Cal. Close Rolls*, 3 Aug., 1337.

[46] *Ibid.*, 25 Aug., 1338. [47] *Cal. Fine Rolls*. [48] *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 151, 152.

[49] It is not unreasonable to suggest that this John Megre is identical with the Jean Maigre who, according to M. Bréard, became Abbot of Grestain in 1362.

had been appointed proctor-general for the Abbey. The rent to be paid to the King was £200, and among the sureties were Hugh de la Chambre and Philip de Endlenwyk.[50]

1347. We now come to the exchange of manors to which reference has already been made, a transaction arising directly out of the war, which can be fully understood only by the aid of the French documents. Among the prisoners made at the taking of Caen by Edward III. and the Black Prince in July, 1346, there was a Norman seigneur, Jean de Melun, lord of Tanquarville and chamberlain and constable of Normandy. He was conveyed to England with other prisoners, and in the following year he was permitted to return to Normandy on parole that he might arrange, as he says in one of his documents,[51] "for the discharge of the ransom in which I stand bound to the high and mighty prince, my lord Edward, eldest son of the King of England, Prince of Wales." Jean de Melun had large estates in Normandy, and the Abbot and Convent of Grestain had manors in England, which had been "of little or no value to them for 20 years past by reason of the wars and the perils of the sea and thieves and robbers.[52] An arrangement was come to by which the Abbey agreed to transfer to Jean de Melun seven English manors valued at 30,000 pounds *tournois*, the Norman seigneur granting in exchange his Barony of Mezidun, and other properties if necessary to make up a yearly income of 1000 pounds *tournois*; he also undertook to obtain the consent of the Pope and the King of England to the alienation by the Abbey.[53]

The deed, dated 28 December, 1348,[54] by which Jean de Melun made his grant, speaks of the seven

[50] *Cal. Fine Rolls.* [51] Bréard, p. 239. [52] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

[53] The valuation of the manors is given as "trente mille livres tournois du prix du fleurin à l'escu du coing du roy de France, de bon or et de bon pois de seine sous et huit deniers tournois." This would seem to make the £ *tournois* equivalent to 7s. 6d., but its value varied, and even taking it at ¼ £ sterling as is not unusual, one cannot help feeling that the price put upon the seven manors was a gross over-valuation.

[54] Bréard, p. 239.

manors as having been demised to the Prince of Wales for 1000 years, but as we shall see this is not strictly correct. In another document, dated 25 October, 1348,[55] the names of the manors are given as:—*Nortonne en la contee de Sumestre, Courlz en la contee de Vilers, Rammeraggen en la contee de Supelimpton,*[56] *Merfez en la contee de Buckingham, Grafton en la contee de Northantescira, Creting et Mikefeld en la contee de Suffolk.* The manor of Derneford, co. Cambs., seems to be omitted in the transcript of this document.

So much for the story of the exchange as gathered from the French documents. Turning now to the English records we have first the licence by Edward III. dated 27 November, 1348,[57] in which the names of the manors occur in a more familiar form, viz., Norton, co. Somerset, Connok, co. Wilts., Rammerugge, co. Southampton, Mersh, co. Bucks, Grafton, co. Northants, Derneford, co. Cambs., and Cretyng and Mikelfeld, co. Suffolk. The King gives licence to the Abbot and Convent of Grestain to demise to "the king's merchant Tidemann de Lymbergh" these manors, "which pertain to the priory of Wilmington a cell of their house" for 1000 years saving always to the King during the war as much rent as the Prior would have paid yearly for the manors. This rent, as we see from a later document, was £86 11s. 10d.[58] It would appear that the churches associated with the manors were not included in the demise, as we find the King presenting to the church of Norton, diocese of Bath and Wells,

[55] Bréard, p. 241.

[56] This puzzled M. Bréard, who says in a foot note: "*Peut-etre Huntingtonshire.*"

[57] *Cal. Pat. Rolls,* 22 Edw. III.

[58] *Ibid.*, 23 Edw. III.: this was by no means the first transaction between the royal family of England and Tidemann. In 1343 Tidemann and others were entrusted by the King with the important, but delicate, business of redeeming the great crown which had been pledged in Holland for 45,000 florins, equivalent to £8062 10s. This was successfully carried out, and during the next year Tidemann provided a further sum of £778 for the recovery of certain jewels belonging to the King deposited with merchants in Cologne. Further, in 1347, Prince Edward, as Duke of Cornwall, leased to Tideman de Lymbergh the coinage of the stannary of the Duchy of Cornwall for 3 years at a rent of 3500 marks yearly. *Cal. Pat. Rolls.*

in February, 1348–9, and to the church of Little Cretyng, diocese of Norwich, in July, 1349.[59]

The transaction, so far as Tidemann was concerned, was completed in 1350, when he conveyed the seven manors to Sir Thomas Pole,[60] the King having granted licence for their sale to any Englishman, so long as it was not in mortmain, and Tidemann having compounded for the yearly rent.[61]

This alienation of the Abbey manors necessitated a modification of an arrangement previously made by the King in regard to a part of the yearly rent due from the Prior for the custody of the Abbey possessions. In 1348 the King had ordered the Prior to pay £85 out of the rent to Eleanor la Bottillere (later described as the King's kinswoman), late the wife of James le Boteller, Earl of Ormond.[62] In 1349 the Countess and Thomas de Daggeworth, whom she had married, complained that they could not obtain due payment from the Prior by reason of the manors being held by Tidemann de Limbergh, and thereupon the King granted that they should receive the amount from Tidemann. Then, in 1350, when Tidemann compounded with the King for his rent, it was provided that the Countess and her husband should receive the same sum yearly at the Exchequer so long as the priory remained in the King's hands.[63]

1349. John Picot was appointed Prior—Peter Chryspyn being dead—and received the custody of the priory and remaining lands, rendering to the King so much of the original farm of £200 as remained due.[64] This remnant seems to have been agreed at £20, and in 1351 the Prior had licence to cut and sell trees to this value in his wood at Wilmington to pay his farm to the Crown.[65]

1360. The peace of Bretigny between England and France was signed, and in due course the lands of the alien priories were restored. Irregular warfare, how-

[59] *Ibid.* [60] *V.C.H. Hants.*, IV., 395. [61] *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 24 Edw. III.
[62] *Cal. Close Rolls.* [63] *Cal. Pat. Rolls.* [64] *Cal. Fine Rolls.*
[65] *Cal. Pat. Rolls.*

ever, continued in Normandy. M. Bréard says that in 1361 a band of Englishmen and adventurers of every country took up their quarters in the Abbey of Grestain, which had been pillaged and probably in part destroyed in 1358, and solidly repaired it. On the 15th November, 1364, "Anglo-Navarrois" soldiers attacked and took the Abbey and occupied it for 9 months.[66]

1370. After an undisturbed period of less than 10 years the possessions of the alien priories were again taken into the King's hands "on account of the rupture by the French of the peace lately made at Calais." The keeping of Wilmington Priory and all its lands and possessions was committed to John de Valle, the Prior, for a yearly farm of £20, his sureties being William de Enlenewyk and John Piers.[67] In 1374 the rent was increased to 50 marks, viz., the ancient farm of £20 and 20 marks of increment, the Prior to pay tenths with the rest of the clergy.

In connection with this seizure of 1370 an Extent of the possessions of the Priory was made,[68] which supplies important information, for it not only gives particulars of what the Priory still held, but also of property which, for the time being at least, it had ceased to enjoy. The document gives evidence of some oppression and some losses, but nothing like so extensive as has been supposed. To take one example, Mr. Cooper (*S.A.C.*, IV., 52) hints that the alienation of the seven manors to Tidemann de Lymbergh was probably forced upon the Abbey, whereas the light thrown on this transaction by the French documents makes clear that it was an excellent bargain, greatly to the advantage of the Abbey.

1372. The inclusion of "the advowson of the Priory of Wilmington" in the King's grant of the Honour of Aquila to John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, in 1372,[69] is at first sight a little puzzling. But it was no new thing for the over-lordship of the manor to belong to the Honour of Aquila, for when Queen

[66] *Op. cit.*, 85, 87. [67] *Cal. Fine Rolls.*
[68] Add. MSS. 6164, f. 417. [69] Cott. MSS. XV., 1.

Margaret, mother of Edward II., had a grant of the Honour in 1314, the Abbot of Grestain was required to do fealty and service to her for the lands and tenements held by him in Sussex.[70] It would seem that the patronage of the Priory was claimed by the Crown on the ground that it was, in part at least, a royal foundation, by reason of the gift by William the Conqueror of the manor of Peniton with Ramridge, co. Southants.

1375. THOMAS AUNCELL is Prior. The keeping of the priory was committed to him at the same rent as before, he paying tenths and finding the chantries, alms, and other divine services anciently ordained in the priory, and keeping up all the houses and buildings thereof. Roger Gosselyn of Fyrle and John atte Doune were his mainpernors.[71]

1377. JEAN PICOT is mentioned by M. Bréard as Abbot, about whom, he says, nothing is known. It seems probable that this is another instance of a former prior of Wilmington acceding to the abbacy; John Picot, as we have seen, was prior in 1349.

It would appear that the Wilmington priors were not sufficiently liberal in the rent offered by them to the King, and the neighbouring priory of Michelham came forward as a higher bidder, the custody of Wilmington being granted to them in 1379 at a rent of £100 to the King and an additional 20 marks to the Prior of Wilmington for life, and afterward to the King. Notwithstanding this arrangement, the King granted the priory to James de Berners on October 6, 1385, in satisfaction of a promised annuity of £100. The Prior of Michelham petitioned the King against this grant, pleading that he took the lease "in order to avert the ruin and damage that might have befallen the priory of Wilmington if it had fallen into the hands of laymen," and that he had been put to great expense in restoration of the buildings, in keeping out the sea and in many other ways.[72] The

[70] *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, p 116. [71] *Cal. Fine Rolls.*

[72] Ancient Petitions, 6229, given in full in Mr. Salzman's *History of Hailsham*, p. 222. The expense of keeping out the sea must refer to lands in the Pevensey marshes, where alone the priory possessions were near the sea.

only relief obtained by the Prior of Michelham was permission to dispose of all the goods of Wilmington which were his before the grant to Sir James Berners.[73]

For the next 20 years the priory, when in the King's hands, continued to be treated as a convenient piece of revenue producing property to be granted first to one person and then to another who had monetary claims against the King; and, needless to say, the principal object of the grantees was to make as much as possible out of the concession. It is not surprising, therefore, that the buildings were neglected and that claims should arise in respect of waste and destruction; it is doubtful even whether the prior of Michelham, notwithstanding his protestations, was much better than the laymen. In 1386 Sir Edward Dalingridge and two other knights were appointed to enquire into these happenings during the time of the prior of Michelham and other farmers. Then in 1389, Sir Edward himself had a grant of the priory in respect of a fee of 100 marks a year due from the King for his services, Sir Edward paying 10 marks a year in addition, making an equivalent rent of 110 marks. On his death in 1393 the tables were turned and the prior of Michelham had a share in assessing the serious waste and destruction allowed and committed by Sir Edward in the possessions of the priory. This assessment, which gives important details of the buildings, is printed as an Appendix to this paper.

After Sir Edward Dalingridge's death the Bishop of Chichester (Richard Mitford) appears to have held the priory at a rent, and in 1394 the King granted to him all moneys which should be found due from previous farmers, so that, when recovered, the amounts might be applied to repairs. A year later, in consideration of the great expense of the Bishop, especially in the King's Scotch and Irish expeditions, he was relieved of his rent for the custody of the priory, on condition of maintaining it in divine service and in lands, buildings, etc., without waste, and bearing all

[73] *Cal. Pat. Rolls.*

charges thereon. In 1398 the grant to the Bishop (who had been translated to Salisbury) of the monies to be recovered for waste was renewed, such waste, "at great expense to the Bishop," having been found by inquisition to have been done to the value of £11 by Richard Hall and Stephen Holt, late farmers of the priory, and to the value of £58 5s. 6d. by Thomas Wysbech (Sir Edward Dalingridge's co-grantee) and others.[74]

In 1396 a truce was made with France for 25 years, but the alien priories and their possessions do not appear to have been immediately restored, for in 1398 the King presented a vicar to Willingdon Church, one of the benefices belonging to Wilmington.[75] The truce enabled the Abbot of Grestain to come to England, perhaps in connection with the return of the Abbey possessions, and he was present as Prebendary of Wilmington at Bishop Wm. Rede's Visitation at Chichester in 1397, and again in 1402.[76] This Abbot was probably Jean de Foussi, Doctor of Canon Law, who died at Paris in 1407. His burial at Cluny points to his having belonged to the Cluniac order.[77]

1401. WALTER BRYSTOWE, the last prior, took the oath of obedience to the Bishop of Chichester and his lawful ministers on October 14, 1401, in the church of St. John, Southover.[78] He was still in charge of the priory in 1403, when, with other alien priories, it was for the last time resumed into the King's hands.[79]

During the six or seven years of peaceful occupation of the priory by its rightful owners probably some reparations were executed and some re-stocking took place, for when the Crown grants began again a

[74] For all these last-mentioned grants, see *Cal. Pat. Rolls* under the various dates mentioned.

[75] *Ibid.*

[76] *Bishop Rede's Regr.* (*Suss. Rec. Soc.*, Vol. VIII.), 104.

[77] Bréard, p. 90.

[78] *Suss. Rec. Soc.*, Vol. XI., 263.

[79] *Acts of the Privy Council*, Vol. I., 195. Mr. Salzman (*V.C.H. Sussex*, II., p. 122) mentions that in the Pipe Roll, 6 Hen. IV., Walter Bristow is described as a Cluniac monk. The suggestion made above that the Abbot at this time was a member of this Order may have a bearing on Bristow's appointment as Prior.

considerably higher annual value was put upon the priory. Thus, on November 20, 1403, a grant of it was made to William Tristour, the King's saddler, and Walter atte Water, clerk, and William Swan, clerk, as in payment of 210 marks yearly in respect of a debt of £600 for saddlery supplied.[80] In 1405 it was granted to Sir Richard de Arundell in lieu of an annuity of 100 marks given by the King six years earlier, the priory being taken as worth 200 marks yearly and Sir Richard being answerable to the King for the surplus.[81]

It is noticeable that in these grants the maintenance of divine service in the priory is in most cases specifically required, and where the grant is to a layman there is commonly associated with him a priest, who, probably, would be responsible for such services. William Tristour, the saddler, had two clerks included with him in his grant, and associated with Sir Edward Dalingridge in an earlier grant there was Thomas Wysbech, chaplain. To this association Thomas Wysbech probably owed his presentation by the Crown, in 1395, to the church of Hartfield, belonging to the priory. In 1392 the right of next presentation to this church had been granted to Sir Edward Dallingridge,[82] but he died before the vacancy occurred.

The final stage in the history of the priory was reached when, on July 21, 1413, the priory and the manor of Wilmington and all manors, lands and possessions in Sussex late belonging to the Abbey of Grestain and valued at 240 marks yearly were granted by the King to the Dean and Chapter of Chichester to hold during the war or as long as they should be in the King's hands, without paying anything therefor, for the relief and support of the cathedral and of divine service therein and for celebrating masses for the King and his ancestors and for Nicholas Mortymer, late the King's minister, who was buried in the chapel of S. Mary in the cathedral.[83] In the following year,

[80] *Cal. Pat. Rolls.* [81] *Ibid.* [82] *Ibid.*
[83] *Cal. Pat. Roll*, p. 76. Recited in the next grant.

as a result of a petition by the Dean and Chapter to the King in Parliament, fresh letters patent, dated 7 November, 2 Henry V. (1414),[84] were issued renewing the previous grant and making it permanent. Emphasis seems to be intentionally laid on the priory and prebend being of the foundation of the King's predecessors and of his patronage, and licence was given to the Dean and Chapter to appropriate and hold all that was included in the grant to their own uses, the same to be held of the King *in capite.*

During the period of 150 years, in which the late priory possessions remained in the hands of the Dean and Chapter, there is only one matter calling for special mention, and that is the Augmentation or New Endowment of the Vicarage of Wilmington in 1541 (see Appendix). This affords some useful information about the priory premises, with which Mr. Godfrey deals in his architectural description, and we need only say here that its effect was to constitute as a vicarage house a portion of the old buildings in which the vicar, Henry Marshall, was then living.[85] A portion of tithes in the parish of Arlington called the tithe of Mylton was appropriated to the vicar, as were also three small pieces of land, on one of which the present vicarage stands.

In 1565, in pursuance of an agreement for an exchange of manors and lands with Sir Richard Sackville, the Dean and Chapter granted to Queen Elizabeth, with a view to their re-grant to Sir Richard, what appear to be the whole of the Sussex possessions of the late priory, with the exception of certain specified churches and tithes.

There is no reason to think that this change of ownership of the Wilmington property to any degree affected the status of the house. It was a manor house, and accommodation for the holding of courts would be necessary, but it was also a farm-house in the sense that the occupant was responsible for the

[84] *Pat. Roll.*, 2 Hen. V.

[85] Henry Marshall's will is printed in *S.A.C.*, XIII., 49.

cultivation of over 800 acres of demesne lands attached thereto. We have no information about the tenants during this period, any more than we have during the Dean and Chapter period, except in one case. Thomas Culpeper, belonging to a well-known Sussex family (see *S.A.C.*, XLVII., 47), resided there under a lease from Lord Buckhurst; he died on October 7, 1603, and was buried in Wilmington Church. In his will, dated October 22, 1602, he is described as Thomas Culpeper, of Wilmington, Esquire.[86] His widow, Elizabeth Culpeper, continued to reside at Wilmington, and died there in 1606. John Colepeper, the nephew of Thomas, was settled at Folkington, the adjoining parish, which also belonged to Lord Buckhurst, and he was buried at Wilmington on October 6, 1607.

One change occurring at this period was that the north wing of the priory buildings ceased to be occupied as the vicarage, and was re-incorporated in the manor house. In a Terrier of the vicarage endowments, dated 23 July, 1635, it is stated that "by right and composition a vicarage house adjoining to the manor house with the garden belongs to the vicarage, but the vicar of late hath not enjoyed it nor had any consideration for it, the same being appropriated to the manor house." A house, either specially erected or already existing on a piece of vicarage glebe land called Pyngwell Haw at some date unknown became the vicarage house. A new house was built by Edward Lord, the vicar, in 1744. It was not unnecessarily large, the ground plot being 35 feet by 27 feet, four rooms upon a floor, and the contract price with the old materials was £200.[87]

The Wilmington estate in or about the year 1700 descended to Spencer Compton, second son of the third Earl of Northampton, his mother being one of the three Sackville co-heiresses. He was Speaker of the House of Commons from 1715 to 1727, and when he was subsequently raised to the peerage he took his

[86] *S.A.C.*, XLVII., 63.

[87] Letter from Mr. Lord among papers at Compton Place, Eastbourne.

title (Baron Wilmington) from this estate. The property passed from the Compton family to that of Cavendish in 1782 by the marriage of Lady Elizabeth Compton with Lord George Cavendish. Wilmington farm now belongs to Lt.-Col. Roland V. Gwynne, D.L., D.S.O., by purchase from the Duke of Devonshire.

After the above paper was in type a booklet, published at Le Havre, by the Rev. C. H. D. Grimes, M.A., F.R.G.S., F.R.Hist.S., giving an account of Grestain Abbey, based upon M. Bréard's work, came under my notice. From this, with its accompanying illustrations, it appears that some slight remnants of the Abbey buildings still exist and form part of more modern structures.

APPENDIX I.

Memo. R., K.R., 17 *Ric. II., East.*

Waste committed by Edward Dalingregge, deceased, and Thomas Wisbech at Wilmington. . . . in aula et una camera voc' le Schudde eidem aule annex', ad damp' 40s., in una alia camera et camera senescalli & una drawth chambre cum latrinis, ad val' 100s.; in coquina cum larder' & camera coci, 26s. 8d.; in [principali] camera facta ad modum Turris & una alia camera annexa cum latrinis, ad val' 26s. 8d.; in tribus aliis cameris in parte orientali aule cum capella & latrinis annexis, 40s.; in cancello ecclesie parochialis de Wilmyngton, £6; in capella existente in ecclesia predicta, 6s. 8d.; in palis cum aliis muris lapideis a predicta capella usque ad domum voc' le zathous & in eadem le zathous & in domo porcorum extra portam, 20s.; in uno muro lapideo cum domo boverie ibid', 13s. 4d.; in una magna grangia, 100s.; in domo voc' Longhous & in stabulo, 6s. 8d.; in magna domo in qua erant pistrina bracina granar' daiar' stabul' &c., £10; in quadam domo stante super fonte, 20d., in duabus bercar' situat' in camp' vocat Losfeld, 10s.; in molend' vent' & ponte apud Munckenepende cum le warr' ibid', 6s. 8d.; in boscis hegrowes & holtes, viz. prostern' 300 quercus, ad valent' £6. . . .

(*Translation.*)

. . . in the hall and a chamber called the Schudde annexed to the said hall, to the damage of 40s.; in another chamber and the steward's chamber and a drawth chamber with latrines, to the value of 100s.; in the kitchen with larder & the cook's chamber, 26s. 8d.; in the chamber built like a Tower & another chamber annexed with latrines, to the value of 26s. 8d.; in three other chambers on the east side of the hall with chapel and latrines annexed 40s.; in the chancel of the parish church of Wilmyngton,

£6; in the chapel being in the said church, 6s. 8d.; in pales with other stone walls from the said chapel to the house called the Gatehouse and in the same Gatehouse & in the swine house outside the gate, 20s.; in a stone wall with the ox-house there, 13s. 4d.; in a great barn, 100s.; in the house called the Longhouse & in the stall, 6s. 8d.; in the great house in which were bakehouses breweries granaries dairy stall &c., £10; in a certain house standing over the well, 20*d.*; in two sheep-houses in the field called Losfeld, 10s.; in the windmill & the bridge at Munckenepende with the warren there, 6s. 8d.; in woods hedgerows & holts, viz. 300 oaks cut down to the damage of £6.

APPENDIX II.

Chichester Episcopal Register Day [f. 24 r.].

Augmentation or New Endowment of the Vicarage of Wylmyngton.

Richard (Sampson), Bishop, wishing to increase the revenues of the Vicarage of Wylmyngton to provide for more generous hospitality among the parishioners, with the consent of William (Fleshmonger) the Dean, and the Chapter, Rectors and Patrons of the Vicarage, and of Mr. Henry Marshall, Vicar, and [f. 24 v.] at the request of the latter, orders as follows:—The said Vicar and his successors shall have the Vicarage house there, where Henry now dwells, next to the eastern corner of the great old hall of the Manor of Wylmyngton on the north side, containing from north to south 18 ft. and from west to east 30 ft., with the chambers above and below built and belonging to the Vicarage, together with the kitchen on the south of the Vicarage, newly built, also the small court (*curtilagium*) enclosed between the kitchen and the said house, also the garden on the east of the Manor, enclosed by pales, lying between the Manor and its garden, containing in breadth 57 ft. from the wall on the east of it to the said pales, reserving to the Dean and Chapter and to any Canon when there on the business of the Church the right of walking in the garden and of the use of the kitchen. The Vicar shall have all tithes, greater and lesser, and all oblations, mortuaries, profits and pasturage of the churchyard, and all other emoluments of the Church, except tithes of corn (*garbarum*), lambs, wool, hay, calves, milk, cheese, butter, flax, hemp, with all other real (*realibus*) tithes, greater or lesser, growing, etc., on (demesne) lands of the Manor, which are reserved to the Rectors. The Vicars shall also have the meadow called Prestwysh, containing 1 acre, and a croft called Monkyn pynd, containing 1 acre, and another croft called Pyngwellis haw with a barn there lately built, also the right of access to the Vicarage by the door on the north of the new-built kitchen. [f. 25 r.] The Vicars shall also have the portion of tithes in the parish of Erlyngton, belonging in the past to the Dean and Chapter, called the portion of Mydelton. The Dean

and Chapter, as Rectors, shall bear all charges, ordinary and extraordinary, of the Church and Vicarage, tenths and payments to the King from the Vicarage, bread, wine, etc. for service, and repairs to the Vicarage, excepted. The Vicar shall pay to the Dean and Chapter at Wylmyngton 53s. 4d. for the portion of tithes, 14d. for Pyngwellys howe and 3s. 4d. for Monkyn pynd, payments to be made half-yearly at Michaelmas and Lady Day; if any payment is in default 30 days the [f. 25 v.] Bishop may sequestrate till payment is made. Each Vicar shall, at the time of his presentation, make oath to make the payments. Sealed by the Bishop in the Manor of Aldingbourne Oct. 14, 1541. Sealed by the Dean and Chapter in token of their consent in the Chapter House, Oct. 15, 1541.

PRINTED BY
W. HEFFER & SONS LTD.
CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND.